

## IN THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 8 all  
a
1. A method for monitoring a plurality of devices in a common environment,  
2 comprising the steps of:  
3 receiving usage information from one of the devices;  
4 storing the usage information on a memory device of a computer;  
5 using the computer to automatically access a remote database containing  
6 information regarding the device;  
7 transmitting the stored usage information to the remote database;  
8 receiving the information<sup>4</sup> from the remote database; and  
9 generating an action to be taken by the device using the information from  
10 the remote database and the stored usage information.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the usage information comprises:  
2 an average length of time the device is in operation over a period of time;  
3 a number of occasions the device is in operation over the period of time;  
4 a number of times maintenance was performed on the device over the  
5 period of time; and  
6 types of maintenance operations that were performed on the device over  
7 the period of time.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the remote database is accessed by the  
2 computer via an internet connection.

1 4. The method of claim 2 wherein the remote database is accessed by the  
2 computer via a point-to-point connection between the computer and the  
3 database.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of connecting is automatically  
2 performed at regular intervals.

*Sub  
A<sup>2</sup>* 1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the remote database is updated at  
2 intervals using information generated by a manufacturer of a device of the  
3 plurality of devices.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the devices are home appliances and  
2 wherein the common environment is a house.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the devices are items of manufacturing  
2 equipment and wherein the common environment is a manufacturing facility.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of generating a suggested action  
2 comprises generating a written report.

*Sub  
A<sup>3</sup>* 1 10. A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions which  
2 when executed cause a computer to perform the steps of:  
3 receiving usage information from one of a plurality of devices operating  
4 in an environment;  
5 storing the usage information on a memory device of the computer;







